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# ***MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES***

**THE MEF LIAISON ELEMENT: RESTORING A WARFIGHTING CAPABILITY**

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**AUTHOR: Major J. K. Arruda, USMC**

**AY 2000-2001**

**Mentor: Dr. J. B. Matthews**

**Approved:\_\_\_\_\_**

**Date:\_\_\_\_\_**

**Mentor: LtCol D. J. Barile, USMC**

**Approved:\_\_\_\_\_**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**Title:** The MEF Liaison Element: Restoring a Warfighting Capability

**Author:** Major J. K. Arruda, United States Marine Corps

**Thesis:** Linguistic and cultural liaison should not be the only mission of the MEF Liaison Element (MLE). Coordination and control of supporting arms in support of allied and coalition forces should be the primary mission of the MLE.

**Discussion:** In 1997, the Active Duty Force Structure Review Group, under direction of the Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC) General C. C. Krulak, recommended the deactivation of the active duty Air-Naval Gunfire liaison Companies (ANGLICO) in order to reduce 400 structure spaces from the fleet Marine forces. With this action the Marine Corps amputated the only dedicated organic capability to assist allied and coalition forces with the coordination and control of Fleet fires.

In the wake of the demise of ANGLICO, the need for a unit to conduct liaison with allied or coalition forces provided the impetus to create the MLE. This unit was to provide worldwide cultural and linguistic liaison for the Fleet Marine Forces (FMF) from just 96 active duty structure spaces. This concept proved dysfunctional and unrealistic. In 2000, General J.L. Jones, the 32<sup>nd</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps, decided to bring back the warfighting capabilities of the former ANGLICO to the MLE.

This paper first gives a historical synopsis of the origin of ANGLICO and its mission, and then analyzes liaison requirements today to provide a foundation for a proposed structure and mission for the MLE.

**Conclusion(s) or Recommendation(s):** This paper proposes an organization for the MLE that has only a modest increase in structure spaces and provides for flexible task organization of liaison teams to meet worldwide liaison requirements for the FMF. Expertise organic to the proposed MLE structure is based on five functional liaison requirements: 1) Linguistic and cultural expertise, 2) operations planning, 3) command and control of forces, 4) intelligence support, and 5) supporting arms employment. Equipment and training proposals are also made based on the five functions of liaison.

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## INTRODUCTION

In 1997 the Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC), General C.C. Krulak, directed the convening of the Active Duty Force Structure Review Group (ADFSRG) to “define the most effective, capable, relevant and realistically attainable active duty force structure for the U.S. Marine Corps.”<sup>1</sup> This tasking was directed in response to: (1) the reduction recommendations of the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) for an end strength cut of 1800 active duty personnel in the active duty force structure and (2) fiscal constraints that were forcing procurement dollars to be used in maintaining then current manpower levels. Additionally the ADFSRG was to look at cutting the support structure in order to bring the operating forces at the battalion and squadron echelons to 90 percent manning levels.<sup>2</sup>

Two of the casualties of the ADFSRG recommendations were the active duty Air/Naval Gunfire Liaison Companies (ANGLICO). 1<sup>st</sup> ANGLICO, located at Camp Pendleton under I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) and 2<sup>nd</sup> ANGLICO, located at Camp Lejeune under II MEF both had a Table of Organization (T/O) of 38 officers and 210 enlisted. The ADFSRG recommended that 400 of the total 496 active duty ANGLICO structure spaces be eliminated. The ADFSRG cited two reasons that showed the rationale for their recommendation. First, the ADFSRG correctly postulated that the Army could have and in some cases already had the ability to effect control and coordination of Fleet supporting arms assets. Secondly, they incorrectly postulated that any Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) Ground Combat Element (GCE) could provide supporting arms liaison to allied or coalition forces in joint or combined

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<sup>1</sup> Active Duty Force Structure Review Group, *Report of the Active Duty Force Structure Review Group*, Quantico, VA, 31 July 1997, 7. Cited hereafter as ADFSRG.

operations from its organic fire support agencies. Additionally, the ADFSRG proposed that the 96 remaining ANGLICO structure spaces be used as an active duty liaison cadre that could be augmented by Reserve Marines to provide a reservoir of capability to meet operating force liaison requirements.<sup>3</sup>

With CMC's approval of this ADFSRG recommendation, 2<sup>nd</sup> ANGLICO was deactivated on 30 September 1998 and 1<sup>st</sup> ANGLICO was deactivated on 14 May 1999. With this action, the Marine Corps amputated the only dedicated organic capability to assist allied and coalition forces with the coordination and control of Fleet fires. The liaison cadre proposed by the ADFSRG, originally titled the Marine Liaison Group (MLG) would provide linguistic, cultural, and military support to MAGTF commanders operating with foreign militaries or governmental organizations.<sup>4</sup> Over a two-year period, the MLG concept has evolved, in a difficult, circuitous manner, into the Marine Liaison Element (MLE). This paper will argue that the linguistic and cultural support capability should only be part of the MLE mission. The warfighting capability of supporting allied and coalition forces with coordination and control of supporting arms in operations should be the central mission of the MLE.

As Marines we pride ourselves as being warfighters first. As the rest of the world continues to advance economically, politically, and militarily, we find the opportunity for working with allied or coalition partners in an unsure and somewhat unpredictable environment ever increasing. This predicament naturally calls for an increased cultural and linguistic awareness by the Fleet Marine Forces (FMF) but it does not call for the reduction in our warfighting capabilities. The deactivation of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> ANGLICO has

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<sup>2</sup> ADFSRG, 1-9.

<sup>3</sup> ADFSRG, 24.

done exactly that. In a recent interview with *Field Artillery* editor Patricia S. Hollis, the 32<sup>nd</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps, General J.L. Jones, discussing his plan for “fixing fires” in the Marine Corps stated: “It was a mistake to get rid of our ANGLICOs.”<sup>5</sup> This perceptive warfighting insight has effected a new look at how the Marine Corps will embrace liaison requirements at the operational and tactical level without eliminating a warfighting capability. The following points will support the thesis of this paper:

- 1) The U.S. Army has “outgrown” the need for air and naval gunfire control support by the Marine Corps.
- 2) There is a definite requirement for the Marine Corps to provide support to allied or coalition forces with regards to the planning, coordination and control of supporting arms during allied or coalition operations and exercises.
- 3) An emphasis on cultural and linguistic understanding of allied and coalition forces is long overdue in the Marine Corps.

## **SEEDS OF SUPPORTING ARMS CONTROL**

Between World War I and World War II, the Marine Corps’ purpose and mission would evolve from a small naval infantry force that guarded ships and naval bases participating in ground wars on a small scale, to a force of significant size that would specialize in amphibious landings. This transformation would plant the seeds, much by happenstance, for the Marine Corps to grow into the premier combined arms fighting force it is today.

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<sup>4</sup> “ANGLICO to Stand down,” *Marine Corps Gazette*, (April 1998): 7.

The failure of allied efforts at Gallipoli during World War I caused most military forces to think amphibious operations as impractical. The Marine Corps leadership however, believed that the failure at Gallipoli was due to avoidable errors made during the operation. From 1922 through 1925, small-scale Fleet landings were conducted that primarily identified problems with current amphibious techniques and needs for increased training and testing. Also in the same decade, the Marines were first utilizing aircraft in “close support” of ground units in Nicaragua. A concerted effort to write amphibious doctrine would not occur until 1933. With the small wars of Central America ending and the growing specter of the Japanese in the Pacific creating the impetus for War Plan Orange, the Marine Corps focused on writing *Small Wars Operations* and *Tentative Manual for Landing Operations*, the latter publication creating the amphibious doctrine that would be tested and validated in the Pacific during World War II. The Fleet Marine Force was also established in 1933 as a permanent force in readiness for operations with the fleet, prepared for amphibious landings. Over the next eight years Fleet Exercises (FLEX) would be conducted, testing the new doctrine and modifying techniques where applicable based on lessons learned.<sup>6</sup>

With the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States would plunge into a Pacific War that would be the real test bed for amphibious doctrine. Some problems still remained to be worked out in the doctrine, most notably the control of supporting arms during the landing phase. Limits in technology restrained much of the pre-1940 exercises. Among these problems was communications. Communications assets were archaic at best. Contact with ships providing gunfire support was rare. As time progressed, so did

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<sup>5</sup> James L. Jones, General, Commandant of the Marine Corps, “Fixing the Marine Artillery,” Interview by Patricia Slayden Hollis, Editor in *Field Artillery* (September-October 2000): 4. Cited hereafter as CMC interview.

communications but this did not significantly improve the communications problem. In 1941 Naval Shore Observation Parties were formed. These were the Navy teams consisting of a Naval Gunfire Spotter and his enlisted communicators that would go ashore to control naval gunfire for the landing force. Navy communicators however, were poorly trained and poorly indoctrinated for what would confront them ashore. Although Navy communicators would remain as part of the T/O for the different naval gunfire teams used throughout the war, they were dispensed with piecemeal from operation to operation.<sup>7</sup> In 1942, Marine Lieutenant Colonel D.M. Weller added a Marine artillery officer and Marine communicators to the already existing shore observation party to create the Shore Fire Control Party. These teams were used on Guadalcanal and Bougainville with some success. But because these landings were mostly unopposed the teams remained somewhat untested. Over time, this would change.<sup>8</sup>

Operations in the Southwest Pacific Theater brought forward some significant problems with the control of air in support of ground operations. Fratricide prompted General A.A. Vandergrift to call for Marine air to support Marines on the ground. This flew in the face of the Navy's position that only Navy air would be based on carriers. Carrier air had the primary mission of supporting amphibious landings while Marine air, based on land, was primarily committed to strikes against Japanese strongholds and airfields. Marine air did manage, however, to provide support to Marine units on the ground. General Vandergrift also called for the formation of air liaison teams to attach to

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<sup>6</sup> Ken Haney, *Lightning From the Sky, Thunder From the Sea: US Marine Corps Air-Naval Gunfire Support, 1933-1993*, n.p., n.d., 1.

<sup>7</sup> Robert D. Heintz Jr., LtCol, USMC, "Minority Report on (J) ASCO," *Marine Corps Gazette*, (July 1947): 29-30. Cited hereafter as Heintz, "Minority."

<sup>8</sup> Haney, 4-5.



the infantry battalions in order to talk directly to aircraft providing support.<sup>9</sup> At Guadalcanal, air support missions had to be cleared through the flagship. With the ship to aircraft communications net too involved to provide responsive tasking and without direct communications with ground units, many requested attacks were not supported.<sup>10</sup>

Operation Galvanic, the seizure of the Gilbert Islands in the Central Pacific Ocean, would be the proving grounds not only for amphibious landings on opposed objectives but also for many of the adjustments made by the Marine Corps and the Navy in regards to the control of supporting arms in amphibious landings. Each battalion, regiment, division, and landing force headquarters had an air liaison team and naval gunfire liaison team attached. Although no Marine squadrons were on the carriers supporting the Gilberts campaign due to their commitments in the Solomon Islands, two landing rehearsals had helped work out some of the air and naval gunfire control issues. But overall, training prior to the operation was considered inadequate.<sup>11</sup> These two liaison teams were separate entities, however, and would never coordinate their efforts for the landings at Tarawa and Makin, the two objectives in the Gilberts.

Most of the lessons learned at Tarawa, with regards to supporting arms, can be attributed to poor communications, poor coordination, and poor training. These valuable lessons were aggressively applied to later operations. Dedicated command ships would help some of the communications problems. Pinpoint destructive fires that required observed adjustments would prevail in later operations instead of the time driven neutralizing barrages prevalent at Tarawa. Close Air Support (CAS) missions would be closely coordinated with the needs of the assault units on the ground in later operations.

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<sup>9</sup> Haney, 6.

<sup>10</sup> Haney, 4.

Major General H.M. “Howlin Mad” Smith would also call for Marine aviators who were “thoroughly schooled in the principles of direct air support” to be assigned to escort carriers in future amphibious operations.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps the most comprehensive change instituted with regards to supporting arms was the institutionalization of the Joint Assault Signal Company (JASCO).

## THE PREDECESSORS OF ANGLICO

In 1944 the U. S. Joint Chiefs of Staff ordered the formation of the Joint Assault Signals Companies in the Marine Corps and the Army to support amphibious operations. The units that formed in both services originally had the same structure. Each JASCO consisted of a Headquarters element, thirteen Air Liaison Teams, nine Shore Fire Control Parties, and ten Shore Party Communications Teams.<sup>13</sup> These teams were detached out to the rifle battalions of an assault division. Air Liaison Teams would also attach to the regimental and division headquarters. The intention of the Joint Chiefs was to form a unit that would consolidate the specialized skills and requirements of control and coordination of supporting arms in an amphibious landing environment. This action of the Joint Chiefs was clearly in response to the lessons learned during assault operations in the Southwest and Central Pacific theaters.

The JASCO itself never fought as a unit. The JASCO was quite simply a clearinghouse for teams that needed an “administrative and housekeeping roof” as they

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<sup>11</sup> Philip A. Crowl and Edmund G. Love, *Seizure of the Gilberts and Marshalls* (Washington D.C., CMH, 1993), 161-162.

<sup>12</sup> Crowl and Love, 161.

<sup>13</sup> William M. Doolittle, Captain, U.S. Army, “An Artilleryman in a Joint Assault Signal Company,” *Field Artillery Journal*, (August 1945): 463.

were dispatched out to the assault divisions.<sup>14</sup> In the Marine Corps there were six companies during World War II, designated 1<sup>st</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> JASCO accordingly. The numerical strength of a Marine JASCO in 1944 was approximately 500 with approximately 100 being Navy personnel.\* JASCO teams succeeded in completing the connection between the units that needed support and those agencies that provided support. Very quickly however, problems with the structure and method of employment of the teams fostered change in the Marine Corps JASCO. The Army never found great success with their JASCO teams for many reasons. More to the point, the naval character of amphibious operations and the intricacies in the employment of naval gunfire and CAS in amphibious operations were quite foreign to the Army. As a result, the Army JASCOs were disbanded after World War II.<sup>15</sup>

By the end of 1944, the Marine Corps had realized two major problems with the way the Joint Chiefs had structured and promulgated the employment of JASCOs. The inclusion of Navy communicators in the JASCO T/O proved to be unwieldy as discussed previously. Although it was difficult to do, the Navy communications detachment was dispensed with in the Marine JASCO T/O, taking away any justification for Marine JASCOs to be Joint.<sup>16</sup>

Major General H.M. Smith also ordered the assignment of JASCOs to the division level in the V Amphibious Corps in the Central Pacific vice the corps level as promulgated by the Joint Chiefs. Like other forces in the Pacific, JASCO teams also

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<sup>14</sup> Heintz, "Minority," 28.

\* An actual JASCO T/O could not be found but from readings there seemed to be much consternation to the wisdom and makeup of the Joint Chief promulgated JASCO T/O. According to Haney on page 11 of his paper, 4<sup>th</sup> JASCO deployed in June of 1944 with 503 personnel: 35 Marine officers, 9 Navy officers, and 459 enlisted, of which 100 were Navy enlisted. Thus the assumption is made that this was the T/O of a Marine JASCO during World War II.

<sup>15</sup> Robert D. Heintz, Jr., LtCol, USMC, "And Now the ANGLICO," *Marine Corps Gazette* (January 1951): 24.

<sup>16</sup> Heintz, "Minority," 30.

needed to rest and recover from combat between the campaigns they participated in. But when assigned to the corps level this didn't happen because the teams were immediately tasked out to subsequent campaigns upon completion of a preceding campaign. Being assigned to the division level also afforded the opportunity to develop teamwork with the same division vice transferring from one to another. In 1945, the Marine JASCO became the Assault Signal Company (ASCO) however; they were still referred to as JASCO by the units they supported.<sup>17</sup>

### **“AND NOW THE ANGLICO”**

After World War II, it seemed that the ASCO would fade away. What was a difficult unit for most to understand in wartime was completely obscure in peacetime. With postwar downsizing and restructuring in full swing, the ASCOs were eliminated from the Fleet Marine Forces. Naval gunfire teams would be consumed in the division headquarters staffs. The communications teams were integrated into the communications elements of the infantry and shore party battalions. Aviation liaison officers and artillery forward observers logically went back to the wings and artillery regiments respectively.<sup>18</sup> As the postwar restructuring continued the first Air-Naval Gunfire Liaison Company would stand up in 1949. Over the next two years each Marine Division would stand up an ANGLICO. In addition, a separate ANGLICO would be assigned to Fleet Marine Forces, Atlantic (FMFLant) in order to support Army divisions as needed. Since the Army had disbanded their JASCOs after the war, it seemed logical that a “Marine ANGLICO be formed to provide air and naval gunfire liaison elements to support Army divisions

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<sup>17</sup> Haney, 14.

during occasional ventures into amphibious training.”<sup>19</sup> The initial structure of ANGLICO was basically a headquarters element, an air support platoon, and a naval gunfire platoon.

The mission of the new ANGLICO was to support Marine and Army divisions in the control of fleet air and naval gunfire. They would quickly get their chance as South Korea was invaded by North Korea on 25 June 1950. From then on, “Anglicans” would participate in every major action that U.S. forces were to be involved in. Through the years the mission and organization of ANGLICO would evolve. Requirements to support Army airborne units would necessitate airborne qualifications for Marines in ANGLICO during the mid 1950s. In Vietnam, ANGLICO teams would support allied forces, a mission that would become more and more prevalent over time.<sup>20</sup>

The last mission statement for ANGLICO was promulgated in 1992. “To support the U.S. Army or allied division, or elements thereof, by providing the control and liaison agencies for the employment of naval surface fires and naval air support in the amphibious assault or other operations.”<sup>21</sup> Although ANGLICO would never grow to the behemoth size of the World War II JASCO, it would grow to a final T/O of 248 Marines and sailors. The organization had evolved to a Company Headquarters and three Brigade Platoons. Within the Brigade Platoons were the Supporting Arms Liaison Team (SALT) and Firepower Control Team (FCT). These teams were the executors of the ANGLICO mission. Within the headquarters were eleven sections that included, among others, a communications section and a motor transport section. ANGLICO as a unit had become

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<sup>18</sup> Haney, 38.

<sup>19</sup> Heintz, 24.

<sup>20</sup> Haney, 38-59.

<sup>21</sup> Table of Manpower Requirements T/O Checklist, T/O 4854 ANGLICO, Report No. I5921C4A-1, as of: 97/10.

quite self-sustainable. It had to be. The nature of detaching teams to other units on a routine basis required those teams to be self sufficient when they deployed with regards to transportation, communications, and weapons. It would have been impossible for ANGLICO to enjoy the success and reputation that it did by showing up needing support, vice being ready to support. This appears to be one of the shortfalls of the current plan for the MLE. This predicament will be discussed later.

## SUPPORT OF THE ARMY

What was envisioned originally to be an occasional requirement, ANGLICO support of the U.S. Army soon became a major commitment. Starting with Korea, ANGLICO teams developed a reputation for success while working with Army units. Supporting arms in the U.S. Army's point of view was centered almost exclusively on artillery. The whole fire support structure within the battalions, regiments, brigades, and divisions was focused on the coordination and delivery of artillery support. ANGLICO brought air and naval gunfire to the close fight for the Army. In 1965 the "Concept for Improved Joint Air-Ground Operations" was published that outlined the use of Air Force teams to support the Army in controlling air to support the fight.<sup>22</sup> The Air Force concept of CAS was quite different than the Marine concept of CAS however, and ANGLICO remained the only unit capable of bringing naval gunfire to bear for the Army. So ANGLICO support was still requested by Army units. The support of the U.S. Army became quite routine in the years to come. 2<sup>nd</sup> ANGLICO provided habitual support to the Army's 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division in routine training and contingency operations.<sup>23</sup> In

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<sup>22</sup> "MOA Between the U.S. Air Force and U.S. Army for Liaison Support," *Field Artillery* (May-June 1996): 17.

<sup>23</sup> Marine Corps Historical Center Archives, "History of Second ANGLICO."

the 1980s and 1990s, active duty and reserve ANGLICO units would support most of the rotations at the Army's Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) in Fort Chaffe, Arkansas and Fort Polk, Louisiana. Support of the Army had become the primary mission for ANGLICO.

In the mid 1970s, the Army stood up their Fire Support Team (FIST) concept to improve observed fire support for maneuver forces. These teams were dispatched to the company level to conduct the control of artillery and mortar fire.<sup>24</sup> ANGLICO Firepower Control Teams (FCT) would integrate with these teams to control naval air and naval gunfire. Over time, as the Air Force Tactical Air Control Parties (TACP) were permanently attached to Army units at the corps through battalion levels; the need for ANGLICO teams to coordinate and control air became redundant. Since the Army FIST controlled the artillery and mortar fire and the Air Force TACP controlled the air, ANGLICO teams found themselves increasingly relegated to fulfilling the duties of glorified naval gunfire spotters when supporting Army units. Many Army units grew understandably more and more reluctant to use ANGLICO teams to control air, artillery, and mortars as the proficiency and abilities of their FISTs and Air Force TACPs improved. As "Jointness" standardized the artillery/mortar call for fire (CFF) and the CAS brief, the need for ANGLICO teams in an Army unit's zone of action diminished. Compounding this diminishing need for ANGLICO teams by the Army was the close similarity between the naval gunfire CFF and the artillery/mortar CFF. The former covers the same information as the later in 2 separate elements (or transmissions) vice 3 separate elements. With minimal training on the capabilities and characteristics of naval gunfire

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<sup>24</sup> David H. Petraeus, Colonel, Damian P. Carr, Major, John C. Abercrombie, Captain, "Why We Need FISTs – Never Send a Man When You Can Send a Bullet," *Field Artillery* (May-June 1997): 4.

and the acquisition of High Frequency (HF) radios to use the doctrinal naval gunfire spot net, Army units began to advertise their internal ability to control naval gunfire.<sup>25</sup> This ANGLICO redundancy was also aggravated by the diminishing availability, utility, and relevance of naval gunfire in the last decade.

All this supports the ADFSRG postulation and one of the arguments of this paper. The Army no longer requires support from ANGLICO. One reason, the standardization of the procedures for controlling supporting arms in the Joint environment, primarily the terminal control of air, made ANGLICO teams a redundant capability that over time was used less and less. Another reason is the reduction of importance of naval gunfire as a factor in the supporting arms “equation” over the years. With the decommissioning of the Navy’s battleships and the expansion of the battle space in modern warfare, the lethality of naval gunfire has become almost obsolete. Finally, the original mission of ANGLICO was to support the Army in amphibious operations and training. With the advent of heavy lift aircraft, the Army’s acquisition of maritime shipping, and the land battle focus of the Army since the beginning of the Cold War, an Army unit conducting amphibious operations or training today is rare indeed.

## ALLIED AND COALITION SUPPORT

Is there a need for the Marine Corps to support allied and coalition forces with planning, coordination and control of supporting arms? One needs to look no further than the Battle of Khafji in Operation Desert Storm to find the answer. ANGLICO teams attached to Saudi, Omani, and Qatari units as part of the Joint Forces Coalition-East (JFCE) found themselves in the middle of an Iraqi advance toward the coastal Saudi town

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<sup>25</sup> Vance J. Nannini, Major, “Universal Observers: Punching our FIST into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” *Field Artillery* (May-June 1997): 15.



of Ras al-Khafji. The Iraqi forces greatly outnumbered the coalition forces in the area but the astute integration of CAS by the ANGLICO teams into the ground scheme of maneuver was a force multiplier for the coalition forces. By breaking up Iraqi attacks and preventing Iraqi reinforcement of the city, ANGLICO employment of CAS allowed coalition forces to defeat the Iraqis.<sup>26</sup> Probably the biggest take away from this battle was the lesson the coalition forces learned after working with ANGLICO:

The Saudis in particular were initially surprised that they could defeat the veterans of the Iran-Iraq War so readily, but did not miss the key role that the CAS played in the Iraqi defeat. The Saudis were sold on CAS and now demanded great amounts for the upcoming ground war.<sup>27</sup>

This clearly demonstrates the general lack of understanding that most of our coalition and allied partners have of the capabilities and effects of supporting arms when effectively integrated into the ground scheme of maneuver. It is more than likely that the absence of ANGLICO teams in support of coalition forces during the Battle of Khafji would have resulted in an Iraqi victory. As it stands today, the Marine Corps has no dedicated unit to conduct this mission. The GCE of a MAGTF, contrary to the ADFSRG postulation noted earlier, would not be able to muster up the personnel or equipment “on the fly” to meet all the requirements of such a task successfully. One of the key ingredients to the success of ANGLICO at Khafji was the unit cohesion and focus the teams had. This enabled them to “call an audible” in a dynamic situation and make it work.<sup>28</sup> An ad-hoc unit would find it much more difficult to succeed in such an environment. Could a hastily formed supporting arms liaison team support coalition forces with no supporting arms on station

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<sup>26</sup> J.R. Braden, *The Battle of Khafji: A Coalition Air Ground Task Force Victory*, MMS Thesis (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps Command and Staff College, AY 98-99), 1-7.

<sup>27</sup> Braden, 32.

<sup>28</sup> Braden, 37-38.

other than an Air Force Special Operations AC-130? The short answer is, no it could not. Controlling that aircraft requires knowledge of the aircraft capabilities and training. An ANGLICO FCT did exactly that mission in Somalia with great success because they had trained for that mission.<sup>29</sup>

There are many predictable trouble spots in the world where the Marine Corps could find the need to conduct supporting arms liaison with coalition or allied forces. These include the Southwest Asia region, the Horn of Africa region, Korea, Algeria, the Balkans and South America. There are also the unpredictable crises that seem to be the preponderant instances that mobilize U.S. forces. These potential conflicts will require cultural and linguistic liaison in addition to supporting arms liaison in some of the cases.

One of the significant shortfalls ANGLICO had in the past was the total absence of a linguistic capability. Although military officers in most allied and coalition countries do speak limited English, this does not totally solve the problem. As the U.S. finds itself interfacing with allied and coalition forces more frequently in the future, the need for linguistic and cultural understanding will naturally increase. The General Officer Futures Group (GOFG) determined that the MLE was a “useful model” for this mission.<sup>30</sup> This proposal will be discussed later.

## ROUTINE DEPLOYMENT

In the 1980s, ANGLICO teams began to deploy with Marine Amphibious Units (MAU). This enhanced the training with allied units during deployment exercises. In the case of real world contingencies, ANGLICO teams provided flexibility to the MAU

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<sup>29</sup> Marine Corps Lessons Learned System, “Close Air Support; United Shield,” JULLS no. 32432-49183 (March 1995).

<sup>30</sup> “Sessions Report,” *United States Marine Corps General Officers Futures Group* (February -September 2000): 114.

commander by facilitating supporting arms control with allied forces. In 1982, ANGLICO teams supported French and Italian forces in Lebanon. These teams provided, not only a fires coordination and control capability to allied forces, but also exposed those allied forces to the Marine Corps.<sup>31</sup> This improved interoperability between the MAUs and allied forces.

With the advent of the Marine Expeditionary Units (MEU) and the Special Operations Capable (SOC) designation in 1988, ANGLICO support of the six-month deployments became regular.<sup>32</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> ANGLICO provided a detachment every six months to the MEU(SOC) that deployed from Camp Pendleton and two detachments every year to III MEF in Okinawa to train and deploy with the 31<sup>st</sup> MEU. 2<sup>nd</sup> ANGLICO provided detachments every six months to the MEU(SOC) that deployed from Camp Lejeune. These deployments ensured routine training with allied and coalition partners for ANGLICO teams. More importantly they provided the MEU Commander with a means to integrate fires with coalition forces during training and potential contingencies.

As ANGLICO detachments on MEU deployments became the norm, their duties began to expand because of the capabilities that were organic to the teams. Besides the ANGLICO team's expertise in coordination and control of fires, the communications capability they brought with them was their next strongest asset. When asked recently what he thought was ANGLICO's best capability for a MEU detachment, Brigadier General T. L. Moore, former Commanding Officer of 11<sup>th</sup> MEU(SOC) from 1997 to 1999 stated: "communications and interoperability."<sup>33</sup> In the 1990s, MEU(SOC)s

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<sup>31</sup> Doctor John B. Matthews, former Commanding Officer of 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn, 8<sup>th</sup> Marines, 1982-1983, interview by author 26 February 2001.

<sup>32</sup> Marine Corps Historical Center Archives, "History of Second ANGLICO."

<sup>33</sup> Brigadier General T.L. Moore, USMC, Assistant Wing Commander, 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Aircraft Wing, e-mail interview by author, 9 January 2001.

became, increasingly, the unit of choice to execute Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW). As this developed, ANGLICO teams became the nucleus of liaison cells that MEU commanders would build to conduct liaison. This in turn increased MEU interoperability.

This unique capability raises several interesting points. Recent history has shown that more often than not, MEU participation in real world contingencies is in the MOOTW and low intensity conflict (LIC) realm. How will the MEU “fight” with allied and coalition forces in the future? Almost certainly, MEUs will have some role in MOOTW contingencies such as Non-combatant Evacuation Operations (NEO) and Humanitarian Assistance Operations (HAO). In these scenarios they will need a more robust capability in communications and operations liaison support as opposed to control and coordination of supporting arms. The probability that a MEU will conduct bilateral action with a coalition force to fight an enemy in conventional medium intensity operations without the introduction of higher-level forces, such as a MEB, is relatively low.<sup>34</sup> The small size of a MEU makes it the ideal force for unilateral action in MOOTW or low intensity conflict (LIC). With that said, is the robust capability to coordinate and control fires with allied and coalition forces, the trademark of ANGLICO MEU detachments, required on MEU(SOC) deployments? “We as a Corps need to examine how we employ this unit and determine what is a luxury and what is a necessity for mission accomplishment.”<sup>35</sup> These issues will be examined later.

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<sup>34</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Raymond T. Bright, USMC, former Commanding Officer, 1<sup>st</sup> ANGLICO and MLE Working Group Member, interview by author, January 9, 2001.

## **OUT WITH THE OLD, IN WITH THE NEW**

After the CMC decision to deactivate the active duty ANGLICOs in 1997, working groups, made up of MEF staff officers and ANGLICO Commanding Officers, were established to determine what “unit” would be formed from the remaining 96 active duty ANGLICO structure spaces. These MLE working groups, through much consternation, developed many different models to achieve the liaison concept originated by the ADFSRG. Additionally, the Force Structure Planning Group (FSPG) undertook the challenge of refining the MLE working group models into the force structure constraints it was required to adhere to.<sup>36</sup> These models varied in title from the Marine Liaison Battalion (MLB), the Marine Liaison Group (MLG), the Marine Liaison Company (MLC), not to be confused with the Marine Logistics Command (MLC), and finally to the MLE.

This unit has yet to be used in any way that provides added interoperability for any MAGTF with allied or coalition forces. It is, quite arguably, a dysfunctional concept as it currently stands. This is quite evident by the absence of a current mission statement for the MLE over three years since the decision to deactivate active duty ANGLICOs was made. This is by no means a result of failed efforts by the working groups or the FSPG. On the contrary, the different MLE working groups and the FSPG have provided determined efforts to solve an unsolvable puzzle: to create a unit or units that provide the Marine Corps with a world wide liaison capability from 96 active duty structure spaces augmented by reserves.

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<sup>35</sup> BGEN Moore, e-mail interview.

<sup>36</sup> Colonel Darrell A. Browning, USMC, member of the USMC Force Structure Planning Group 1999, interview by author, 22 February 2001.

General J.L. Jones' comments in his *Field Artillery* interview, combined with the GOFG Executive Summary calling for the MLE to have an "ANGLICO-like" fire support coordination and control capability to improve MEF interoperability, has refocused the MLE working groups in their efforts to create a unit that is a viable, warfighting force multiplier.<sup>37</sup>

A definition of some terms, as they will be used in this paper, is in order here. The levels of liaison to be discussed will mirror the levels of war and will overlap in a similar manner, as do the levels of war. Operational level liaison refers to liaison that is conducted at the operational unit level. These units are those that conduct a sequence of actions that produce military conditions that achieve strategic goals.<sup>38</sup> For this paper, operational level liaison will refer to liaison conducted between commands that are making the plans at the Marine forces (MARFOR) theater component and MEF level with some overlap down into the division and MEB level in certain cases. In rare cases it may even apply to the MEU level. This level of liaison will be conducted to increase the understanding of the operational picture and promote interoperability between U.S. and allied or coalition commands at the MEF level and above. More precisely, operational liaison focuses on planning. Operational level liaison should not be confused with operations liaison. Operations liaison will refer to planning conducted with allied or coalition operations staffs by U.S. officers of any level staff "to ensure mutual understanding and unity of purpose and action."<sup>39</sup> Tactical level liaison will refer to liaison conducted between units that are executing the plans. This is predominantly at the

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<sup>37</sup> "Report to the General Officer Symposium," *United States Marine Corps General Officer Futures Group* (February-September 2000): 243.

<sup>38</sup> David Jablonsky, "Strategy and the Operational Level of War: Part I," *Parameters* (Spring 1987): 65.

<sup>39</sup> Marine Corps Warfighting Publication (MCWP) 5-1, *Marine Corps Planning Process* (Washington, DC: United States Marine Corps, January 2000), C-7.

company, battalion (MEU), and regimental/brigade (MEB) and division echelons with some overlap into the MEF or corps level of action. This level of liaison will be conducted to promote interoperability of units at the tactical level. More precisely, tactical level liaison focuses on execution. In this paper, tactical level liaison may not always imply the coordination and control of supporting arms with an allied or coalition force but in the majority of instances it will. Discussion of operational level liaison however, will preclude the coordination and control of supporting arms.

Early guidance to the MLE working groups required them to look no lower than the MEF level when looking at liaison requirements.<sup>40</sup> Although operational level liaison is quite important for MEF interoperability in combined operations, operating at the tactical level, below the MEF echelon, constitutes the preponderance of operations that Marine units are involved in. Consequently, the MLE working groups need to examine tactical level liaison requirements in addition to the operational level liaison requirements when wrestling with the mission statement, T/O, and T/E of the MLE.

At any one time there can be three to five MEUs deployed worldwide. During each of these deployments, training with allied and coalition forces may occur several times. Tactical level liaison, to one degree or another, normally is required during this combined training. Beyond those training liaison requirements, there are often real world contingencies that MEUs will become involved in. Therefore, it stands to reason that liaison is quite important at the MEU level. Liaison requirements at the MEU level are, in fact, routine. This routine liaison would not only be great training for those performing the mission, but it would provide an invaluable knowledge base within the MLE, greatly benefiting the MEF overall.

What then should come out of the MLE working groups as they work through this issue? Some have argued to restructure the active duty ANGLICOs while maintaining the “unit’s honorable name.”<sup>41</sup> This argument has merit when you consider that allies are familiar with ANGLICO. They know the name. They understand the capabilities ANGLICO brings to a fight. Using a different name raises the question: Will the MLE suffer the same confusion with allies as the MEF(Fwd) did when it replaced the Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB)?

Though keeping the original ANGLICO name could have been reasonable at one time, it is unpractical now. It has now been over two years since 2<sup>nd</sup> ANGLICO was deactivated and approaching two years since 1<sup>st</sup> ANGLICO was deactivated. An ANGLICO detachment has not deployed as part of a MEU(SOC) in almost three years. The force structure and equipment that the active duty ANGLICOs once possessed have been dismantled and distributed throughout the respective MEFs. More important, liaison requirements have changed over the decades. Liaison with allied or coalition forces is no longer limited to control of air and naval gunfire. What is now required is a leaner organization that not only retains some of the same central tasks that ANGLICO had (the control and coordination of supporting arms in particular) but also has expanded roles in tactical and operational level liaison in the combined environment. The MLE structure needs to allow for flexible task organization of liaison teams tailored to fit the potential missions they will fill. Therefore the questions to be answered are: 1) What are the liaison requirements at the MEU, MEB, MEF, and MARFOR levels? 2) What are the specific team skills required of liaison elements at each command echelon and how should those

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<sup>40</sup> LtCol Bright interview.



teams be structured? 3) Finally, what should the MLE structure be in order to meet all the liaison requirements?

## LIAISON REQUIREMENTS

After a review of contemporary literature discussing military liaison, it can be determined that, in general, there are five basic functions for liaison teams to perform in order to sustain effective liaison with coalition and allied forces: 1) Linguistic and cultural expertise, 2) operations planning, 3) communications and information systems expertise, 4) supporting arms employment, and 5) intelligence support. The degree to which each of these functions is performed will vary with the different unit levels supported and the different missions of those units. The MLE, therefore, will need to have a flexible structure to task organize teams dependent on the mission and unit supported.\*\*

The MEU level is the one level that will provide routine opportunities for the MLE teams to train and operate with allied and coalition forces. These opportunities provide recent experience expertise and needed field skills to the MLE. As discussed earlier, a robust supporting arms coordination and control capability is not necessarily

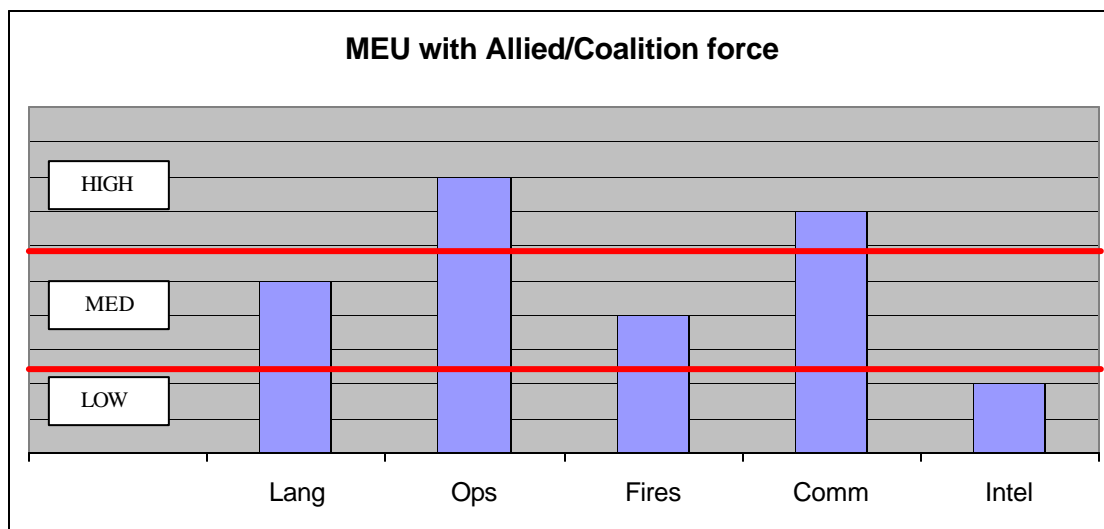
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<sup>41</sup> Michael Morris, Major, USMC, "ANGLICO: Deep Fires or Deep Six?" *U. S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, 124, no. 7 (July 1998): 59-62.

\*\* These five functions of liaison were derived by the author from a review of contemporary articles in professional military journals that discussed military liaison with allied or coalition forces. Frenzel stresses the preeminence of cultural understanding through linguistic discourse. Storile, in addition to linguistic support, discusses the importance of intelligence, communications, and supporting arms support. Lewis discusses the importance of integrating operations with coalition forces, which is best served by strong operations planning and communications. Rice and Clauer stress the imperatives of unity of effort and unity of command in coalition operations, which can only be achieved through integrated operations, command, control, and communications, and linguistic and cultural understanding. Joint Pub 0-2 also discusses the importance of unity of effort in multinational operations, which is achieved through interoperability and the sharing of information. These five functions were prevalent in several other articles not discussed here.

required for liaison at the MEU level. What is definitely required is a liaison capability that is subsumed in operations and communications, with linguistic and fires coordination and control capabilities to a lesser degree (Figure 1). In discussion of the employment of his ANGLICO detachment during MEU(SOC) deployment, Brigadier General Moore stated: “I can accomplish 90% of their mission (possibly more) with a well trained communications element and a few smart, fires coordination trained operators.”<sup>42</sup> Intelligence liaison support would be minimal at the MEU level and could be covered by the MEU Intelligence section for any real world operations if required. There would be no requirement for Reserve augmentation to any MLE teams at the MEU level.

**FIGURE 1. LIAISON REQUIREMENTS**

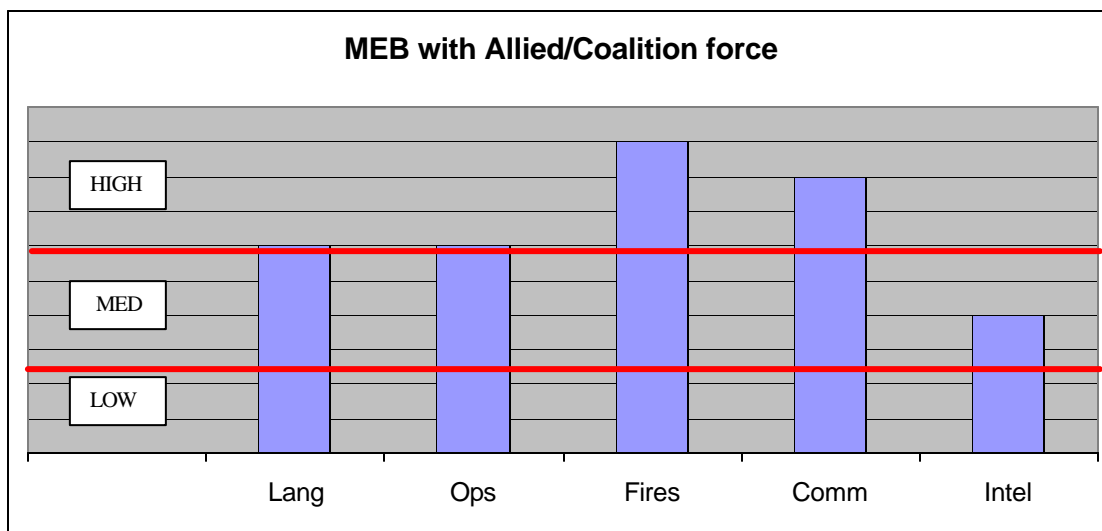


The MEB currently has no stand-alone command element staff. The MEB staff is drawn from the MEF and stood up with augmenting forces. Training at the MEB level with forces happens on each coast about once every two years. MEB staff training occurs

<sup>42</sup> BGen Moore, e-mail interview.

more frequently. Deployment of the MEB with forces attached for training overseas does not occur primarily due to the costs involved. In a real world contingency requiring a MEB to go forward, there is a probability that the MEB would have operational control (OPCON) of some allied or coalition force. This allied or coalition force would require a liaison team with robust fires coordination and control capability, along with an extensive communications capability. Linguistic and cultural liaison, along with a moderate operations liaison capability would also be required to a somewhat lesser degree. Intelligence support requirements would be moderate at the MEB level (Figure 2). Depending on the size of the contingency, the MEF may be ordered to the Area of Operations (AO) right behind the MEB. Regardless, there may be some need for reserve augmentation of the liaison teams. That need would be in direct proportion to the likelihood of the MEF deploying to the troubled area, wherever it may be.

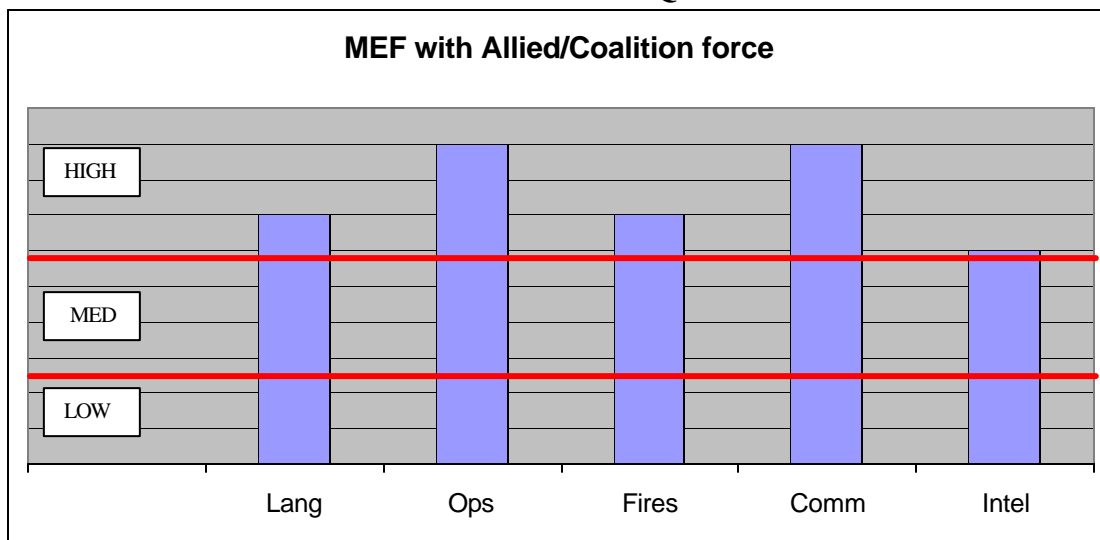
**FIGURE 2. LIAISON REQUIREMENTS**



I MEF conducts annual training that exercises the MEF staff and the staffs of the major subordinate commands (MSC). These staffs then deploy overseas along with parts

of III MEF staffs to conduct Exercise Ulchi Focus Lens. II MEF conducts similar staff training although with less frequency and depth. These training exercises do require linguistic, operations, communications, and intelligence liaison to a high degree. Fire support planning is also required. In a real world contingency where the MEF does go forward, the requirement will exist for all the five functions of liaison (Figure 3). Any MLE assets already in theater with a MEB would most likely become part of that total MEF requirement and could very well be redistributed within the theater. Significant Reserve augmentation of the MLE would need to take place in the event that the MEF were to deploy forward in real world operations.

**FIGURE 3. LIAISON REQUIREMENTS**



The MARFOR level requirements would be unique in the sense that outside of the MEF, MARFOR would not have much in the way of assigned forces. MARFOR would fill the role of component commander in the joint command structure and would, arguably, be focused on the joint operational level aspects of a conflict. If MLE

requirements were present, the teams would need to be robust in the linguistic and operations capabilities, with intelligence capabilities and communications somewhat less required. There would, in turn, be little requirement for fires beyond a small planning capability if any. There could possibly be a logistics coordination requirement at the MARFOR level to facilitate allied or coalition force logistics support from the parent nation of the force. This logistics coordination requirement is not discussed as a function of liaison in this paper, primarily because logistics is a service and national responsibility.<sup>43</sup>

## TEAM STRUCTURE AND SKILLS

Specific liaison team skills at each level of command will vary to a degree within the five functions of liaison proposed in this paper; dependent on the overall mission. At the MEF level and possibly the MEB level, reserve augmentation will also be required to round out the capabilities of a team. The key to determining the team structure is determining what skills are required and what is the appropriate rank for the team leaders. Both these factors are dependent on the command level the liaison team will be supporting.

A liaison team assigned to a MEU would need to have an operations and communications capability central to the team structure. A MEU liaison team detachment OIC, well versed in coordination and control of supporting arms available to the MEU, would have to be knowledgeable about all the capabilities resident in the liaison team. This detachment OIC, an aviator or ground combat officer holding the rank of Captain, would need to be a designated Universal Spotter in the event that there were a need for

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<sup>43</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Pub 0-2, *Unified Action Armed Forces (UNAAF)*, (n.p., 24 February 1995), I-10, IV-18.

control of supporting arms with that allied or coalition force in training or during actual combat.<sup>\*\*\*</sup>

A MEU liaison team communications capability would come in the form of a team of communicators with both man-portable radios and a vehicle-mounted radio (MRC vehicle) capable of working on the doctrinal communications nets required.

The Human Exploitation Team (HET) linguists organic to the MEU command element could augment the linguistic requirements of the team if the MEU commander deemed it necessary. In 1982, the 24<sup>th</sup> MAU Commander reinforced his ANGLICO team with the linguists organic to the MAU Command Element with success.<sup>44</sup> This could succeed today, although the HET linguists, more often than not, are committed with their human intelligence responsibilities. In the case of a real world contingency, however, a linguist or FAO, as part of a MLE contingency fly-in-echelon (FIE) that reinforces a MEU liaison team, could provide this linguistic support capability. A more in depth discussion on FAOs and linguists as part of the MLE will is provided later in the paper.

Liaison team structure for a MEB would be different from a MEU liaison team structure. The major difference is the requirement for a robust supporting arms coordination and control capability. This capability should be inherent in a fires cell within the MLE, which could be appropriately named: Supporting Arms Liaison Team. An operations liaison capability should also be organic in the SALT of a MEB liaison team. The SALT needs to be comprised of a flexible structure in order to attach to an allied or coalition brigade or regimental force to provide planning, coordination, and control of supporting arms from the regiment down to the company level. A strong

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<sup>\*\*\*</sup> A Universal Spotter is a terminal controller for all supporting arms. This will be discussed in a later section.

<sup>44</sup> Dr. Matthews interview.

communications capability, made up of an appropriate number of communicators, man-portable radios and MRC vehicles along with a stalwart linguistic capability are also requirements for a MEB liaison team. The linguistic team should be comprised of an appropriate combination of FAOs and linguists, determined by the MEB staff and the MLE Commander, and should be part of the MEB advance echelon (ADVON) that goes forward early into theater. Reserve augmentation of the MEB liaison teams should be planned for; however, without an event that requires national mobilization of the Reserves, augmentation may be sporadic.

In the event that a MEB is stood up with forces and deploys forward, the probability that the MEF will deploy forward is also likely. In turn, it is reasonable to assume that a period of national mobilization of U.S. forces, to include the Reserves, will follow. A MEF liaison team must be strong in all elements of liaison, but team structure must be particularly robust in operations, linguistic, and communications capabilities. The remainder of the fires cells (SALTs) in CONUS would naturally deploy forward. The Reserve ANGLICO teams could augment these SALTs to enable a more robust capability for the SALT. Additionally the SALT(s) already in theater may be reassigned to support other allied or coalition partners depending on the dynamics of the buildup. Operations liaison teams (team structure to be defined later) will also deploy forward to support subordinate, adjacent, and higher allied and coalition commands. These operations liaison teams could be augmented with reserve officers and Marines from the MEF Augmentation Command Element (MACE).

Linguistic and cultural support teams comprised of target language linguists and FAOs from the MLE would deploy forward as required. Intelligence liaison, if required, could also be fielded out of the small organic intelligence structure within the MLE.

MARFOR level liaison requirements should be minimal. Any such requirements, beyond the MEF requirements could adequately be met with MACE augmentation.<sup>45</sup> These requirements if present will consist of operations, linguistic, and intelligence liaison support.

## **A WARFIGHTING MLE**

Can this expanded liaison role be accomplished with the current structure spaces allocated to the MLE? The ability to meet worldwide liaison requirements to improve interoperability for the MEF with 96 active duty structure spaces would be truly remarkable. With such a constraint on structure spaces, a unit designed to provide world coverage for MEF liaison requirements would have limited ability to effectively execute the mission for which it was formed. It is easy to show on paper that a certain number of billets are filled and claim a capability for a unit. It is quite another to put that unit into practice in the field and make it work. Compounding the problem is the difference in how I MEF and II MEF envision the capabilities of the MLE being used. Because I MEF is reinforced in the war plans currently in place, it assumes the “warfighting” MEF mantle. The focus is the MEF, with the MEU and MEB being additional capabilities. II MEF on the other hand, is essentially a force provider for the current war plans. Therefore, II MEF assumes the duties as the “MEU-centric” MEF and focuses efforts in that light. III MEF,

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<sup>45</sup> Colonel T.D. Metler, USMC, Commanding Officer, I MEF Liaison Element, Camp Pendleton, CA, telephone interview by author, 28 December 2000.



located in Okinawa, has less than half the structure of the MEFs located in CONUS, and currently does not have the MLE built into the structure. Regardless, III MEF routinely plans, trains, and operates with allies within their Area of Responsibility (AOR). This implies a significant requirement for some form of MLE support. With the differences between the MEFs, the MLE structure must reflect accordingly.

To provide maximum flexibility in task organizing liaison teams within the MLE, a liaison cell of five Marines serves as the foundation to tailor teams to meet specific liaison requirements for each situation. This basic cell consists of an Officer in Charge (OIC) and an Assistant OIC, one being an aviator, the other being a ground combat officer. The rest of the cell consists of two field radio operators and a fire support man (Table 1). The need to reinforce this basic cell, to tailor it to the specific mission and unit supported, will have to be accommodated for in the structure of the MLE.

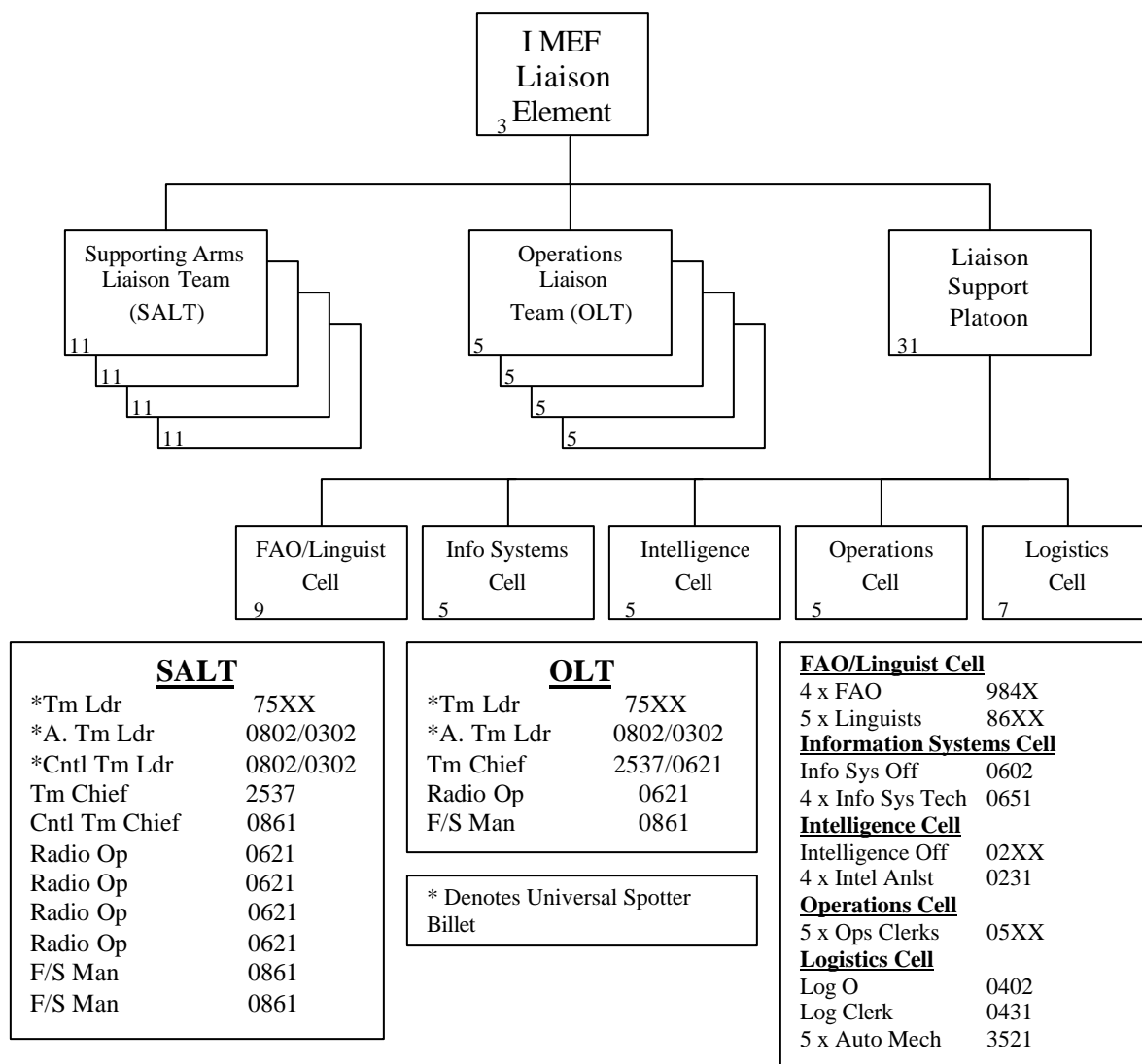
**TABLE 1. BASIC LIAISON CELL**

<b><u>Billet description</u></b>	<b><u>MOS</u></b>	<b><u>Rank</u></b>	<b><u>Notes</u></b>
Team Leader	75XX	O-3/O-4	If Team Leader is 0302 or 0802 then Asst Team Leader is 75XX.
Assistant Team Leader	0302/0802	O-3/O-2	
Team Chief	0861/2537	E-4 thru E-6	If team is at tactical level then team chief is 0861. If team is at operational level then Tm Chief is 2537.
Radio Operator	0621	E-1 thru E-4	
Fire Support Man	0861	E-1 thru E-5	

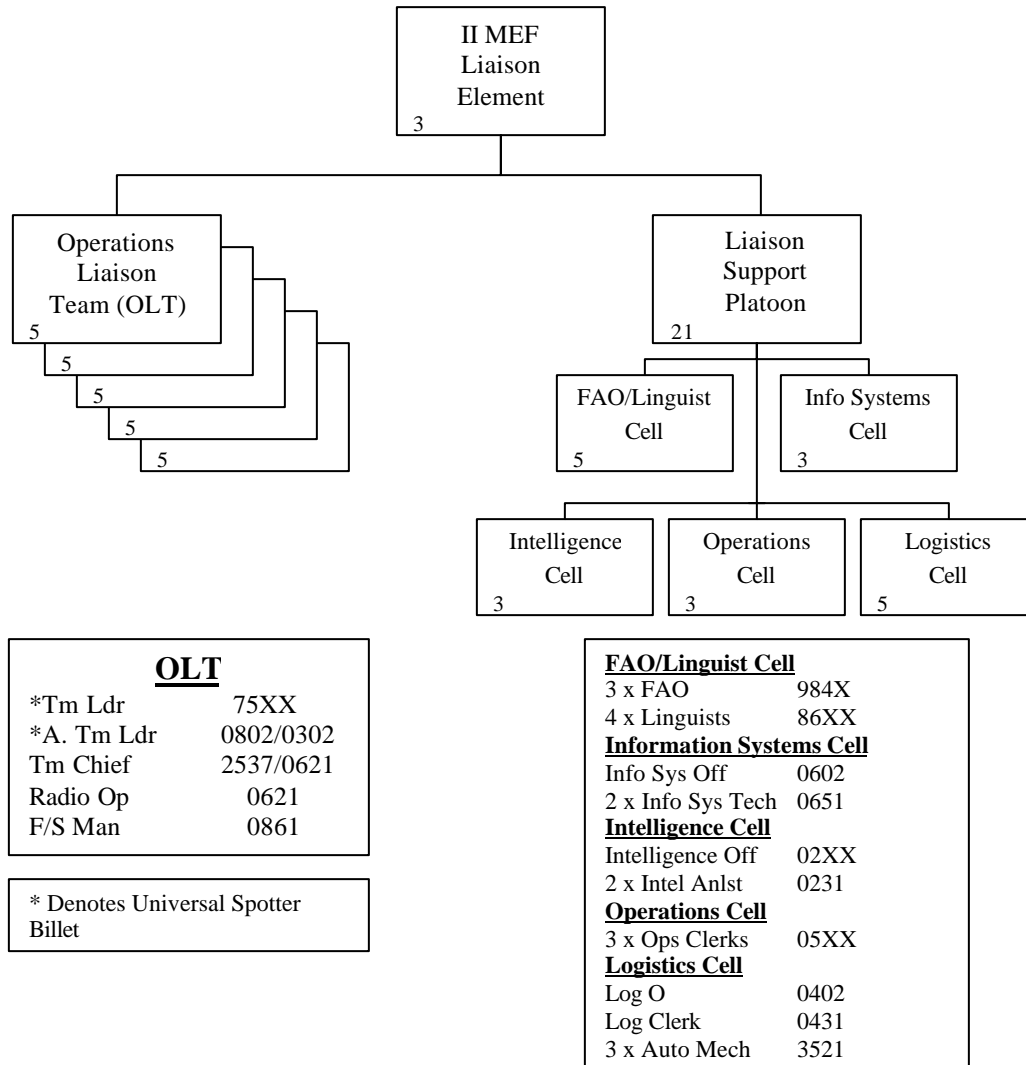
## I MEF LIAISON ELEMENT

The I MEF Liaison Element structure that is proposed here reflects the “warfighting” MEF liaison requirements. It consists of a Command Element; a Fires Platoon made up of four SALTs; an Operations Liaison Platoon made up of four Operations Liaison Teams; and finally a Liaison Support Platoon made up of a Linguistics Cell, an Operations Cell, an Information Systems Cell, an Intelligence Cell, and a Logistics Cell. Total structure spaces for I MEF Liaison Element are 29 officers and 69 enlisted. (Diagram 1)

**Diagram 1. I MLE Structure**



**Diagram 2. II MLE Structure**



## II MEF LIAISON ELEMENT

As discussed earlier, the MLE in II MEF is predominantly focused on MEU support. This does not preclude the possibility that a liaison requirement outside of the normal MEU support rotation may occur. The proposed T/O for II MLE reflects that potential requirement. II MLE comprises of an Operations Liaison Platoon consisting of five OLTs and a Liaison Support Platoon that mirrors the structure of the I MLE Liaison

Support Platoon. One distinct difference between I MLE and II MLE is the absence of a SALT Platoon in the latter. If II MEF were to deploy forward with a liaison requirement for a robust supporting arms coordination and control capability, any of the SALTs in I MLE could reinforce II MLE. The total structure spaces for II MLE is 18 officers and 31 enlisted. (Diagram 2)

### III MEF LIAISON ELEMENT

Since the proposed structures of I MLE and II MLE contain no redundancy, the ability of either I or II MLE to support III MEF liaison requirements is doubtful. In addition, a significant contingency anywhere in the Pacific Rim would require III MEF conduct liaison with allies or coalition partners in the region. The increase in structure spaces to create a third active duty MLE to support III MEF requirements would be similar to the structure of II MLE (Diagram 2). The 31<sup>st</sup> MEU would need MLE support twice a year, while liaison requirements for III MEF itself could be covered by non-deployed OLTs.

### THE FIRES PLATOON

The SALTs are two of the basic liaison cells (Table 1) combined and reinforced to provide supporting arms liaison capability to a vertical slice of an allied or coalition brigade, which is a MEB equivalent force. The SALT leader can task organize within his team to provide a fires control capability for two companies and a fires coordination capability at the battalion; or he can provide coordination at the regiment and one battalion and control for one company. The SALT leader will draw capabilities from the

Liaison Support Platoon such as a motor transport vehicle mechanic or a linguist to reinforce his SALT, providing a tailored capability to the unit his team is supporting. Other liaison teams can attach to a SALT out of the Operations Liaison Platoon or from another SALT to increase the supporting arms coordination and control capability. The SALT structure reflects the MEB level requirements for robust capabilities to coordinate and control fires and communicate, as discussed earlier. Flexible task organization is imperative for the SALT. End item equipment for a SALT would include man-portable and vehicle mounted communications systems to allow monitoring and use of all the doctrinal nets used to conduct operations. Additionally, target marking and designation equipment are fundamental to the SALT T/E. The SALT leader should hold the rank of an O-4 since his liaison responsibilities will generally be at the brigade and regimental echelon of command. The senior SALT leader would hold the billet of Fires Platoon Commander.

## THE OPERATIONS LIAISON PLATOON

Operations Liaison Teams (OLT) consist of the basic five Marine liaison cell. These teams give the MLE the flexibility to reinforce a SALT, provide a MEU detachment, or provide an operations planning cell to any level allied or coalition force. An OLT could be reinforced with an information systems technician and a linguist or a FAO from the Liaison Support Platoon and deploy forward to the brigade, division, or corps level. This same team could deploy forward as an advance FIE for a MEU in transit to a contingency operation. An OLT could be reinforced with a motor transport vehicle mechanic and deploy as a MEU detachment with the appropriate MRC vehicles and

radios that fulfill the concerted communications and operations liaison capabilities required of a MEU liaison detachment. Finally, two OLTs could be combined to create a SALT if needed. The rank of the OLT leaders should be appropriate to the command level the liaison team is supporting. The senior OLT leader not in a deployment cycle would hold the billet of Platoon Commander.

### THE LIAISON SUPPORT PLATOON

The Liaison Support Platoon consists of all the “commodity” capabilities required for allied and coalition force liaison that the basic liaison cell does not have (Diagram 1 & 2). The platoon consists of five cells that generally cover the remaining functions of liaison defined earlier. This platoon provides a “one stop shopping” location for the MLE Commanding Officer (CO) to flexibly tailor liaison teams to the mission and unit level they are assigned to. The senior FAO within the Liaison Support Platoon would act as the Platoon Commander.

### MEU SUPPORT

As noted earlier, the MLE detachments that support a MEU consist of an OLT pulled out of the Operations Liaison Platoon reinforced with elements from the Liaison Support Platoon. This team, though small, has the capability to meet the preponderance of potential MEU liaison requirements, emphasizing operations liaison and communications. The MEU detachment also has the capability to coordinate and control supporting arms on a small scale if required. One important component of a MEU liaison team is a vehicle mechanic. The MEU liaison team should employ two MRC vehicles.

Having the mechanic on the team is essential and adds versatility to the detachment. This Marine is also inculcated into other team responsibilities. Cross training skills within the teams at all levels in the MLE is critical. In the case of real world contingencies where added liaison requirements exist, liaison detachments such as an FAO or linguist heavy OLT can deploy forward from CONUS to reinforce the MEU liaison team. When these MEU teams return from deployment, they report back into the Operations Liaison Platoon ready for tasking with recent experience and knowledge from being forward deployed. With four OLTs in the MEU deployment rotation, these teams will deploy with MEUs approximately twice every three years.

## UNIVERSAL SPOTTER

The argument for a Universal Spotter designation has been bantered about for years but has never met with success. A Universal Spotter is a terminal controller for all supporting arms. Policy in the Marine Corps has been one that allows only Naval Aviators or Naval Flight Officers to be designated Forward Air Controllers (MOS 7207) after completion of the Expeditionary Warfare Training Group's (EWTG) Tactical Air Control Party (TACP) course.<sup>46</sup> The structure of ANGLICO as it was, had the FCT as the "trigger puller" team providing terminal control of supporting arms to include CAS; however, ground combat officers, instead of aviators, were assigned as FCT leaders by T/O. This posed a contradiction between doctrine (ground combat officers as FCT leaders) and directives (only naval aviators are designated as FACs). Many requests for a change in this directive have been denied. The resistance against changing this directive

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<sup>46</sup> Marine Corps Order (MCO) P3500.19A, Aviation Training and Readiness Manual, Vol. V (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, United States Marine Corps, January 1995) 10-4. Cited hereafter as T&R Manual, Vol. V.

can be understood when one considers the manpower problems that the Marine Corps is burdened with.

When the Marine Corps has to justify the number of aviation billets for manpower requirements, FAC billets count as aviation billets. These “excess” billets are built into the force structure to ensure there will be enough aviators to fill flying billets even with a reasonable shortage of pilots. As a shortage of aviators occurs, Air Officer and FAC billets within ground units go unfilled. In recent years the shortage has become so acute that the “rent-a-FAC” policy has surfaced. Since infantry battalions need aviators to control air and those billets are unfilled, squadrons will temporarily assign squadron pilots and NFOs who are designated with the 7207 MOS to support the training of a ground unit. Once the exercise or training is complete the pilot returns to the squadron to continue in his flying responsibilities. This stopgap measure does not solve the FAC shortage for ground units.

There is also the argument: if aviators are not required to control air then why must aviators be assigned ground tours? Before long, aviators would not conduct ground tours and would be limited in their perspective on the Marine Corps as a whole. This is not the case, however. The requests to change the directive, that only aviators be designated as FACs, were not initiated by aviators who wanted to avoid ground tours, but by ground units that needed FACs. Many aviators want to be FACs.

There is, most assuredly, a need for aviators to conduct ground tours as a FAC or Air Officer. There is however, a requirement for non-aviators to be designated as FACs also. Taken further, there is a requirement for certain Marines filling certain billets to be designated Universal Spotters in the Marine Corps. Control and coordination of



supporting arms requires focus, strict attention to detail, and repetitive training to become proficient. It is a perishable skill even after short periods of inactivity. Ground combat officers, after completion of an EWTG TACP course and a comprehensive unit training program that includes indirect fires coordination and control with forward air control would have the prerequisite skills and proficiency to safely provide terminal control of all supporting arms as a designated Universal Spotter.

In the former ANGLICO, artillery officers and infantry officers that were Firepower Control Team leaders required the skills and authority to be Universal Spotters. Though the skill was always there, the authority was not. In the MLE, the two officers that are assigned to every basic liaison cell require the designation as a Universal Spotter. This designation should stay with that Marine officer while he is assigned to the MLE in one of those billets after he completes the TACP course and some form of unit training program. When that officer transfers from the MLE he will lose that designation as a Universal Spotter. If he returns for another tour with the MLE in a liaison team, that designation should once again be assigned to that officer after some form of unit refresher program is completed. This is similar to what aviators experience as they transfer in and out of duty involving flight operations (DIFOP) and duty-involving flight denied (DIFDEN) billets.

## LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL LIAISON

If the MLE is to routinely conduct liaison with allied and coalition forces, it must have an organic linguistic capability and cultural understanding to effectively work with

those forces. Assigning linguists and Foreign Area Officers (FAO) to the MLE would effect a significant improvement in interoperability for Marine forces.

Ninety eight percent of linguists in the Marine Corps are tied up in the intelligence community on interrogator-translator teams and signals intelligence or on I&I duty.<sup>47</sup> Rarely are these Marines focused on the alliance aspect of their specialty. Mostly they focus on the threat or adversarial aspect of their specialty. Standard operating procedure (SOP) in the Marine Corps, when faced with the need for linguists in the liaison mode, is to find out who speaks the target language and pull those Marines out of their parent units and send them off in support of an exercise or deployed force. It would serve the Marine Corps well to have linguists assigned to the MLE to augment the liaison teams as necessary. Team augmentation is the key. Assigning a linguist to a singular team would not work. The limited number of linguists in the Marine Corps and the requirement for constant practice of his highly perishable skill would preclude him from assignment to one team. The structure of the MLE must be flexible enough to task organize the linguists to different teams on an “as needed” basis and allow the linguists to move between echelons of teams at the regiment, battalion and company level in order to be located where most needed.

Use of FAOs at the higher echelons of liaison (corps, division, and possibly brigade) would alleviate the shortage of linguists and put them at the levels where they can make a positive impact. Using a FAO at the battalion level would not be the best use of a limited asset. FAOs bring to the table much more than a linguistic capability. Utilizing their cultural expertise would significantly improve interoperability at the

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<sup>47</sup> Colonel Metler telephone interview.

operational liaison level. Again, the structure of the MLE must provide for the same flexible use of the FAOs as with the linguists.

FAOs hold their billet as a secondary MOS, which creates problems for their primary MOS credibility if they remain in a FAO billet for an extended period. By the time a FAO completes his two years in regional studies and language training and one year in his “target” country in advanced language study, he must return to a billet in his primary MOS. In the past, FAO billets were somewhat limited to Naval Attaché positions. After a FAO completed his return tour in his primary MOS, his next tour choices were, a Naval Attaché tour that would jeopardize his future chance for promotion, or stay in the fleet and no longer pursue billets that he and the Marine Corps had invested three years of effort to. This process meant that the Marine Corps and the FAO received little return on those 3 years of training. Changes in the program over the last few years have made progress in correcting this problem. One of the more significant potential changes to improve this situation is the assignment of FAOs to the MLE. After a return primary MOS tour, an officer could fulfill his payback FAO tour at the MLE. This keeps him in the fleet and more importantly, gives the FMF a return on the training investment made by the Marine Corps instead of the investment return being put into exclusive Naval Attaché tours.<sup>48</sup>

## RESERVES

Under the current plan, Reserve ANGLICO teams would heavily augment the MLE. This would make sense at the tactical level with Reserve Marines falling in on

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<sup>48</sup> Patrick J. Carroll, Major, USMC, “Current Status of the International Affairs Officer Program” *Marine Corps Gazette* (February 2000): 61-62.

empty positions in the active duty teams for short duration training or during a time of national mobilization. This however creates a dichotomy. Tactical level liaison teams, as noted earlier, are needed on a routine, long term basis deployed with MEU(SOC)s or with allied and coalition forces during contingencies. They are not short term. These teams attach to the regiments, battalions, and companies of other forces, providing interoperability between those units and Marine forces and will frequently assist them with the coordination and control of joint land and sea-based fires. These teams must be proficient and work as a team. This can only be accomplished by a concerted training effort with all the team members. Reserve ANGLICO teams, because they only deploy and train for one two-week period annually and train one weekend per month could not maintain the proficiency required and would disrupt the team by their absence the majority of the time. These teams could possibly fill the operational level liaison team requirements for training such as UFL, because those higher-level requirements are predominantly short duration; however, they are not trained to that mission. These Reserve Captains', Sergeants', Corporals', and Lance Corporals' knowledge, experience, and rank do not match the requirements for operational level liaison teams. Operational level liaison would have to be conducted at the O-4 through O-6 level since they would be dealing with allied and coalition officers of similar ranks. This level of liaison would deal with interoperability issues, current and future operations planning to include integration of fires and maneuver, and command relationships. Put more concisely, operational liaison focuses primarily with planning while tactical liaison focuses on execution.

The solution to correct the problems of how the reserve teams are utilized is a difficult one to solve. Reserve teams when used as separate entities show a general lack of proficiency. This is not due to the individual reserve Marines but to the nature in which they must train. First, Reserve ANGLICO units more often than not have Reserve Marines filling billets that are not a T/O billet for their MOS. There is a wider range of different MOS trained Marines in the Reserve ANGLICOs as opposed to the narrow range of MOSs required for the ANGLICO mission. This is not altogether bad if a concerted effort is made to cross train that Reserve Marine to a standard required for the billet he fills. One weekend a month and two weeks annual training does not necessarily define a concerted training effort, especially when discussing the highly perishable, detailed skills required of an ANGLICO team member at any level. It is better to have those Reserve Marines flush out vacancies within the active duty teams than to use them as separate teams. This however, does not solve the dichotomy discussed earlier.

Would it not make sense to restructure the Reserve ANGLICOs to create a better fit to augment the new mission and structure of the MLE? Why do we keep the Reserve ANGLICOs in the old structure and old mission? Senior Marine Officers, in general, resoundingly say we cannot operate without our Reserves. We must, therefore, tailor our Reserve ANGLICOs to fit the mission they will execute in training and real world operations. This new structure should enable augmentation of higher echelon liaison teams responsible for planning and coordinating operations and supporting arms and reduce, if not completely do away with, the tactical control of supporting arms conducted at the company level. These higher echelon liaison skills required are less perishable and not as difficult to train to.

## EQUIPMENT

Currently, the T/E for the MLEs on each coast are inadequate. As discussed earlier, MRC-138 and MRC-145 vehicles were an essential piece of equipment for ANGLICO teams that attached to the battalions and brigades they supported. The very nature of liaison requires a liaison team to be somewhat self-sufficient when supporting units they are not organic to. This is compounded when discussing allied or coalition partners. The phrase “out of sight, out of mind” holds true in liaison operations. A liaison team must show up with the equipment it needs to operate. I MLE currently has a plan to “rent” many of the assets it requires, such as MRC vehicles, from units within the MEF such as Communications Battalion.<sup>49</sup> Although this reduces the “overhead” problems such as the man-hour intensive preventative maintenance (PM) that owning equipment entails, it also puts the responsibility of maintaining that equipment in proper working order on units that have no vested interest in the working condition of that equipment. This does not set liaison teams up for success. There was no doubt that the T/E of the former active duty ANGLICO had become bloated in many areas, including vehicles, but properly equipping the teams to conduct operations is critical to the success of the MLE. The preponderance of the T/E items that ANGLICO teams employed should be appropriately reduced to fit the structure and made part of the MLE T/E.

Major end items would include the standard man-portable and vehicle-mounted HF, VHF, and UHF communications suite that the former ANGLICO teams employed. In addition, satellite communications assets would be critical in today’s battlespace. PRC-117D radios were not part of the ANGLICO T/E; however, this radio incorporates VHF, UHF, and satellite communications capabilities into one package and would

streamline the number of radios that liaison teams would have to employ. For SALTs, acquisition of the Forward Observer/Forward Air Controller (FO/FAC) laser rangefinder/target locator system and the Special Operations Forces laser and marking system (SOFLAM) target designator would effect a quantum leap in the tactical capabilities of the teams within the MLE. The MLE is certainly a unit where we should equip the man vice man the equipment.

## TRAINING

Training for the MLE, as with any unit, should focus on all potential missions that the teams may be called upon to support. The uniqueness of the MLE leaves a broad spectrum of possible missions that require constant refinement of perishable skills. Of those skills, the two requiring the most comprehensive and routine training are coordination and control of supporting arms and linguistics.

The potential for disaster is very high when working in the world of combined arms terminal control. This potential increases with an increase in the number of supporting arms assets being controlled. Because of this and because this proposed T/O leaves no room for redundancy of responsibilities, it is imperative that every member of a SALT be an expert in the coordination and control of supporting arms.

With budget constraints limiting the amount of live ordnance that can be expended for training, creative ways of honing skills must be utilized. First, the team members must learn the basics. This can start with classes and “sandbox” exercises conducted during an initial indoctrination phase for Marines that have a potential for being assigned to a SALT or OLT. Teams should also routinely practice the techniques

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<sup>49</sup> Colonel Metler phone interview.

and procedures at a combined arms simulation trainer (CAST). In addition, teams should schedule a supporting arms coordination exercise (SACEX) on a monthly basis at the very least. Since the MLE will have no organic indirect fire assets, it must request units to support the training such as an artillery battery or an 81 mm mortar section from a weapons company out of a rifle battalion. 81 mm mortars have, in the past, proved to be the most expedient to support a live fire SACEX. It is important that the MLE be allocated a significant amount of 81 mm mortar ordnance as part of the non-combat expenditure allowance (NCEA) in order to provide the incentive for these units to support a SACEX.

One of the great benefits to having the SALTs organic to I MLE is the access to training areas in the southwest region of the United States. Within a two-hour drive of Camp Pendleton (or a helicopter flight of less than one hour) there are no less than four training areas that can be utilized to conduct a live fire SACEX. Additionally, San Clemente Island is only 60 miles off the coast of Camp Pendleton and can be utilized for Naval Surface Fire Support (NSFS) training in addition to air and mortars.

Training Marines is one capability of an FAO that has not been very well utilized in the past. When one thinks of an FAO as a “WTI” for linguistics and cultural training, then the return on the training investment for the FAO can be realized.<sup>50</sup> First, FAOs can conduct routine language training with the linguists to refine those highly perishable skills. Second, the FAOs can conduct country training for the liaison teams prior to deployment and during regular PME. This training should cover phrases, words, and culture that give the Marines rudimentary language skills and a cultural understanding they can take with them on deployment



If indeed the structure of the Reserve ANGLICOs were to change to mirror the active duty MLEs structure and mission, training for those Reserve Marines should also change. EWTG Pacific and Atlantic both provide numerous courses that would benefit the Reserves, such as the Fire Support Coordination course and the Expeditionary Warfare Staff Planning course among others. Marine Corps University provides a course on the Marine Corps Planning Process (MCP) for Reserve officers. During monthly and annual training periods, Reserve ANGLICO Marines should train at Camp Pendleton and Camp Lejeune with the respective MLE, augmenting active duty teams during their training.

## **CONCLUSION**

The argument that the coordination and control of supporting arms with allied and coalition forces should be the central mission of the MLE has been supported throughout this paper. With CMC guidance and the GOFG calling for a liaison unit that has the capability to coordinate and control supporting arms with allied or coalition forces, it seems this will actually happen. The MLE working groups however, have quite a difficult task in front of them. They must form a unit that fulfills global liaison requirements for the Marine Corps with only 96 structure spaces. With only a modest boost in structure spaces, from 96 to 196, I MEF, II MEF, and III MEF can each field a liaison element that is tailored to the mission of the respective MEF and is flexible enough to cover requirements that might develop in any number of contingencies. We must build the unit that fits the mission instead of claiming capabilities with a unit that is not manned

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<sup>50</sup> Col Metler phone interview.

appropriately. Once these units are at full capability, the Marine Corps will have units that will enhance the warfighting interoperability of the MEFs in future contingencies.

ANGLICO as a unit was originally formed to support Marine Corps and Army units during opposed amphibious operations. It was a unique unit executing a unique mission. As time progressed, ANGLICO grew in structure and equipment to adapt to the requirements placed upon the unit. These changes built upon the capabilities in place in a logical manner. The T/O and T/E for ANGLICO had evolved over almost four decades by reasonable adjustment to ever-increasing commitments and an ever-refining mission. Support of Army units grew to become routine and was not limited to only amphibious operations. Support of Army units required ANGLICO Marines to have special qualifications such as being airborne qualified. Soon, support of allied units became an added mission. As the missions grew, so did the requirements for equipment. These cumulative changes were never questioned because of the high degree of success and the high demand for ANGLICO teams. One thing however, remained constant throughout the years and was, arguably, the primary reason for the existence of ANGLICO: the capability to coordinate and control supporting arms at the tactical level.

Somehow this fundamental premise escaped the decision makers wrestling with the deactivation of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> ANGLICO and what to do with the 96 structure spaces left for “liaison.” There was ample justification for an adjustment to the mission and for the T/O and T/E to be downsized, but to eliminate the primary mission and reduce the structure by over eighty percent rendered a unit that was completely non-mission capable. Unfortunately, the active duty ANGLICOs, because of the uniqueness of the two units, the expenses incurred to keep them airborne qualified, and the absence of the unit

working with or supporting Marine units, were a convenient pool of 400 structure spaces that produced over twenty percent of the 1800 structure spaces reduction problem that faced the ADFSRG.

The Marine Corps now has an opportunity to create a lean unit that will support Marine units by integrating allied or coalition forces into the operations of the MEU, MEB, or MEF. This unit can be structured to support the functions of liaison, namely: fires, operations, communications, linguistics, and intelligence, and has the flexibility to tailor teams to the mission requirements. Finally, this unit can use reorganized and retrained Reserves to augment teams already in place. This unit can be the MEF Liaison Element.

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